



Calhoun: The NPS Institutional Archive

News Center

News Articles Collection

2015-06

Simulation Lab brings real-life practice to Concordia program

Center for Homeland Defense and Security

Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California

<http://hdl.handle.net/10945/51196>



Calhoun is a project of the Dudley Knox Library at NPS, furthering the precepts and goals of open government and government transparency. All information contained herein has been approved for release by the NPS Public Affairs Officer.

**Dudley Knox Library / Naval Postgraduate School
411 Dyer Road / 1 University Circle
Monterey, California USA 93943**

<http://www.nps.edu/library>

Simulation Lab brings real-life practice to Concordia program

 chds.us/c/item/1835



Photo courtesy of Concordia University

A groundbreaking simulation laboratory headed by Center for Homeland Defense and Security alumnus Jason Nairn at Concordia University in Portland will enable utilities to hone their incident management skills and exercise catastrophic events.

Dubbed the Utilities National Training Center, it will be located along with [Concordia's Center for Homeland Security Studies](#) and [Homeland Security Simulation Center](#) at Concordia's Columbia River campus. Establishment of the school's Center for Homeland Security Studies was led by another master's degree alumnus, Scott Winegar. A former officer with the Portland Police Bureau, Winegar began working on a homeland security curriculum for the school in 2009, having penned his CHDS thesis on the need for more education in the field.

"We have crafted our program to develop future homeland security leaders, and the simulation center is a forward leaning approach to homeland security education," Winegar said.

Concordia Portland was among the first to participate in CHDS' [University and Agency Partnership Initiative](#), which freely shares the Center's curriculum to further the development and reach of homeland security education.

"It is very gratifying to see our alums take the knowledge they gained from their CHDS education, combine it with their personal practical experience, and now take it to the next level by building a lab that really addresses their constituents' needs," UAPI Co-Director Stan Supinski said. "This impressive effort will now feed back into our community and provide a model that everyone can learn and benefit from."

With the academic program on firm footing, Nairn was hired to oversee the Homeland Security Simulation Center in July 2014. A new laboratory focused on incident management for utilities also uses the same assets and facilities.

"Critical infrastructure is a key focus in homeland security," Nairn observed. "On the academic side, we teach in critical infrastructure protection, energy being a key sector. The simulation center and the academic program go hand in hand with protection of critical infrastructure so making that transition to utilities national training center was really in our wheelhouse."

The simulation center features six classrooms and a virtual reality theater that support training and exercising

incident leadership challenges. Next door is an emergency operations center. At a desk with interactive controls and a monitor, participants can operate as members of responding organizations and operate strategically and/or tactically. (See video at www.kptv.com/clip/10879049/concordia-universitys-new-homeland-security-simulation-center).

“Students are able to operate within a realistic incident and fail safely,” Nairn said. “Then we can go back and learn from the mistakes.”

The Homeland Security Simulation Center complements the school’s degree program by providing exercises based on real world events to students as well as for public and private organizations. The latter’s fees help offset costs to students.

“It is truly a partnership,” Nairn said.

For example, the nearby city of Gresham recently practiced an active shooter event in the city to exercise unified command between the police and fire departments. The Center also recently hosted an executive seminar for NW Natural, an area utility, which was devoted solely to company executives and focused on the relationship between executives and incident command during an emergency.

With the Center’s simulation laboratory as a foundation, the [new Incident Management Center for Utilities was established](#) with the school, Portland Gas and Electric, the Western Energy Institute and the firm of Organizational Quality Associates. The lab will help emergency managers stay up to speed.

“They’re really experts in emergency management,” Nairn noted. “NW Natural responds to gas leak emergencies almost every day. They have systems in place. Getting them to work with NIMS just makes the critical infrastructure network more resilient.”

The homeland security curriculum includes standard courses such as cyber-security, infrastructure protection and intelligence while infusing traits such as character and leadership. The chief goals for the Concordia program are to nurture critical thinking skills and ethical decision-making.

“The simulations vary, but the focus is on those two things,” Nairn said. “We teach the basics of the incident command and working in different scenarios, but ultimately we’re practicing command-level decision making. We’re teaching leadership skills.”

[Copyright/Accessibility/Section 508](#)